

Message Text

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CHANGE CLASSIFICATION TO READ CONFIDENTIAL
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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: EARLY INDICATIONS THAT JOE CLARK HAS GROWN IN THE JOB

1. AT FIRST WORKING SESSION OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT (OCT. 13), PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE (PC) OPPOSITION LEADER JOE CLARK TWICE CROSSED SWORDS WITH PM TRUDEAU, FIRST IN DAILY QUESTION PERIOD AND LATER IN DEBATE ON THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE. BY GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG OBSERVERS HERE, CLARK HELD HIS OWN WITH TRUDEAU DURING A TRADING OF HUMOROUS INSULTS AT QUESTION PERIOD AND CLEARLY BESTED THE PM IN AN EXCHANGE OF SPEECHES INITIATING DEBATE OF THE THRONE SPEECH. INDEED, TRUDEAU, WITH UNCHARACTERISTIC CHARITY, ADMITTED DEFEAT IN THE SPEECH-MAKING. HE COMMENDED CLARK FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HIS CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT, "WITH VERY COMPELLING RHETORIC AND, I MUST SAY, DEVASTATING WIT." TRUDEAU THEN SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO EMULATE THE CLARK PERFORMANCE IN HIS OWN SPEECH AND WAS GOOD TO HIS WORD.

2. DURING GIVE-AND-TAKE OF THE QUESTION PERIOD EXCHANGE, THE MEASURE BY WHICH MANY PARLIAMENTARY AFICIONADOS JUDGE A LEADER'S PARLIAMENTARY ABILITY, CLARK WAS
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DEVASTATING. HE OPENED BY POINTING OUT THAT THE FIRST REACTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S THRONE SPEECH HAD COME FROM THE LIBERAL SIDE WITH THE RESIGNATION OF DEFENSE MIN RICHARDSON. TRUDEAU WAS NOT ABLE TO RECOVER FULLY FROM

THAT DIG AND, AT BEST, ACHIEVED A DRAW.

3. CLARK'S SUBSEQUENT ADDRESS ON THE THRONE SPEECH WAS DESCRIBED BY CHARLES LYNCH, THE DEAN OF POLITICAL COMMENTATORS IN OTTAWA, AS "THE BEST SPEECH WE HAVE HEARD FROM AN OPPOSITION LEADER FOR 20 YEARS." THE BULK OF CLARK'S SPEECH WAS DEVOTED TO THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT HAD DESTROYED THE TRUST OF DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE CANADIAN BODY POLITIC. HE LAID PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LIBERALS HAD ADOPTED POLICIES WHICH THEY HAD ONLY RECENTLY REJECTED (READ WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS) AND THE CONFRONTATIONAL STYLE OF GOVERNMENT THEY HAD FOLLOWED, ALIENATING AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER LABOR, BUSINESS AND THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS. RATHER THAN CHANGE INEFFECTIVE POLICIES, HE ASSERTED, THE LIBERALS HAD RESORTED TO PUBLIC RELATIONS GIMICKRY. HE NOTED THAT, "MY LAMENT IS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOR A GOVERNMENT THAT HAVE BECOME SO INSOLENT, SO DIVORCED FROM REALITY, THAT THEY CANNOT EVEN HEAR, LET ALONE RESPOND TO THE MESSAGES OF CANADIANS."

4. CLARK'S APPROACH WAS NOT ALL CRITICISM. HE ASSERTED THAT BILINGUALISM HAS THE FORCE OF LAW WITH THE AGREEMENT OF ALL PARTIES AND "IT WILL REMAIN A BASIC PRINCIPLE OF A PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT." HE DID, HOWEVER, QUESTION LIBERAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY AND SUGGESTED THAT CHANGES WERE NECESSARY TO QUIET THE VALID CONCERNS OF MANY CANADIANS. SIMILARLY, HE SUPPORTED THE CONCEPT OF PATRIATION OF THE CONSTITUTION BUT ASSERTED THAT THE FAILURE OF THE PROVINCES TO AGREE ON AN AMENDING FORMULA REFLECTED THEIR LACK OF TRUST IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. ON BOTH BILINGUALISM AND PATRIATION ISSUES, CLARK SPOKE IN FRENCH.

5. COMMENT: DURING THE LAST SESSION OF THE COMMONS, JOE CLARK WAS CAREFUL IN AVOIDING HEAD-TO-HEAD CONTESTS WITH TRUDEAU AND HIS CAUTION WAS, NO DOUBT, WISE. FEW IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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HOUSE ARE TRUDEAU'S EQUAL IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE, PARTICULARLY EXTEMPORANEOUSLY. THE CLARK OF YESTERDAY'S SESSION WAS QUITE A DIFFERENT LEADER. HE SHOWED BOTH SELF-CONFIDENCE AND WILLINGNESS TO ATTACK. AT THE SAME TIME, TRUDEAU WAS PECULIARLY OFF HIS FORM IN ADMITTING THAT HE WOULD NOT MATCH CLARK'S EFFORTS AND THEN IN READING IN A MONOTONE A RATHER LACKLUSTER SPEECH. CLEARLY, THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE ENCOUNTER SHOULD NOT BE OVERSTATED. NONETHELESS, THIS DOES GIVE AT LEAST THE PRELIMINARY IMPRESSION THAT JOE CLARK IS GROWING RAPIDLY IN HIS JOB AND THAT TRUDEAU MAY HAVE AT LEAST PERIODS WHEN THAT OLD FIRE IS GONE.
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